**WorkforceGPS**

**Transcript of Webinar**

**Jobs for the Future: Two Great Things That Are Even Better Together: Integrating Sector Strategies and Career Pathways at the Regional Level**

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BRIAN KEATING: So welcome everyone to today's "Jobs for the Future: Two Great Things That Are Even Better Together, Integrating Sector Strategies and Career Pathways at the Regional Level." And to kick things off and tell us all about it I'm going to turn things over to Tom Hooper. Tom is a senior director, building economic opportunity with JFF. Tom, take it away.

TOM HOOPER: Great. Thanks very much, Brian, and good afternoon and good morning, everyone. It's definitely bright and early on the West Coast. This is Tom Hooper. As Brian said, I'm a senior director with Jobs for the Future, and welcome to today's peer learning group webinar, which is offered as part of the Employment and Training Administration's supporting sector strategies technical assistance initiative.

We're really excited about today's session, which focuses on the integration of sector strategies and career pathways at the regional level.

Sector strategies and career pathways are key strategies for helping address workforce challenges in regions, and WIOA places a strong emphasis on both. During this webinar my colleague, Mary Clagett, who's a director of national workforce policy at Jobs for the Future, and I are going to spend about 15 minutes providing a brief overview of both sector strategies and career pathways, highlighting their common components and WIOA's emphasis on them.

Keith Lawing, president and CEO of the Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas, will then spend about 15 minutes sharing with you how he's integrated sector strategies and career pathways in his region, including some suggestions for replicating this approach in your area. We'll then have plenty of time for your questions and a really good interactive discussion.

So with that let's take a closer look at sector strategies and career pathways. These are approaches to workforce development and education that share very common goals. For example, both are intended to meet the skill needs of employers and in-demand industries and occupations and result in systems change.

Before we go further it's really important to spend a minute defining our terms to ensure we're all thinking the same way about both sector strategies and career pathways.

Sector strategies are a regional industry-based approach to workforce development. In sector strategies multiple employers from targeted industries gather together to share their common workforce challenges and then work with key education, workforce, and other partners in the community to address those challenges.

How this will generally work very practically is employers from within a specific industry will gather together on a regular basis – it could be every month, for example – and literally talk through their challenges that they're experiencing and then work with an organization like a community-based organization, their workforce board, or community college to identify what those challenges are and then work with their peers to address those challenges.

On the other hand, career pathways align education, training, and support services to enable individuals to get the skills and credentials they need for in-demand family-supporting careers. Career pathways have multiple entry and exit points and include strong articulation between educational levels.

In breaking down sector strategies and career pathways a little bit further we can see that these strategies also share similar key components. For example, both sector strategies and career pathways focus on ensuring that education and training offered in a regional economy is aligned with the needs of employers in that region, and both use LMI to help identify skill needs in a region.

This skill provides some of the other key components of both sector strategies and career pathways. And as you can see, there are definitely some similarities between these two approaches and we'll go through these further and explain in more detail over as well.

I'm now going to hand the presentation over to Mary Clagett, who's going to talk more about the benefits of integrating these two really important strategies at the regional level. Mary, take it away.

MARY CLAGETT: Great. Thanks, Tom. Sector partnerships, it's really important that everyone realize that's doing sector work and also work in career pathways that it's important that you understand these systems, these strategies really work well together. And in fact, it's hard to imagine a really successful sector strategy or a successful career pathways approach, being able to do it independently.

Sector partnerships should use career pathways approaches for the delivery of education and training within their industries. It's especially important for jobseekers and for workers who are low-skilled to increase the odds that they actually achieve the credentials that are needed by employers in high-demand industry sectors and find the jobs that are family-supporting.

Career pathways systems also really need to fully align sector initiatives and industry partnerships. In fact, the most successful career pathways systems utilize industry partnerships to inform the design and the delivery of their services.

I'm going to focus just for a few minutes on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the provisions in the new law that really supports this integration of sector strategies and career pathways approaches. The law focuses on cross-system alignment, on strategic planning across programs, performance measurement and data collection and utilization across systems.

It encourages and in fact requires regional convening planning and service delivery. It encourages training for high-demand industry sectors and the establishment of sector and industry partnerships. It requires that labor market information be used to ensure a focus on high-demand industry needs. And it requires the establishment of career pathways systems. We'll talk a little bit more about that in a minute.

It also requires that local workforce boards play a really important convening and facilitation role in terms of the leveraging of resources, in terms of bringing industry and employers together; and a leveraging and convening role for bringing education and training partners to the table. And it also encourages services for lower-skilled individuals along pathways by introducing new educational progress measures in the performance measurement system.

A central focus of WIOA is certainly the establishment of sector strategies. Sector strategies, as Tom mentioned, are supposed to be systems change approaches. It requires that local workforce boards engage and focus on sector development in regional planning efforts. And it gives workforce boards the authority to develop and implement sector initiatives and industry partnerships. The act really stresses this importance, as bringing employers in like industries together to inform education and training.

Similarly, career pathways is a central focus in WIOA. The new law requires that state boards assist in the development of strategies and supportive career pathways approaches; and it requires that local boards work with secondary and postsecondary education partners to lead efforts in the development and implementation of career pathways for both youth and adults. It also includes multiple planning provisions as well as service delivery authority in support of career pathways.

Sort of our theme in this webinar is this idea that sector initiatives and career pathways are better together. Successful sector strategies require significant changes in how workforce systems provide training. Similarly, career pathways approaches require the full engagement of high-demand employers to ensure system relevance and support for education and training programs.

Sector-focused training should be designed in ways that provide jobseekers and workers with skills assessment, counseling and guidance. Pathways ideally should be mapped for participants, showing the most accelerated route to credential attainment. Career pathways should have multiple entry and exit points that are aligned with stackable credentials and employment.

And it's important that the education and training providers in workforce development systems work really closely with industry and industry partnerships to ensure that these stackable credentials really are aligned with the needs and skills of employers.

Jobseekers and workers can be provided with things like credit for prior learning; competency-based education; and other kinds of training options that can encourage acceleration so that they can achieve the credentials and competencies that are needed by employers and get to work more quickly. This is a win for both employers and for workers.

Career pathways that are sector-focused should offer flexible scheduling, contextualized learning, and opportunities for work-based learning and extensive supports and counseling services. Sector-focused career pathways approaches really do help employers expand their pipeline of skilled workers and are particularly effective in helping low-skilled individuals to successfully complete training.

I'm just going to highlight a couple of examples and then you're going to hear in a few minutes from Keith Lawing, who is the CEO and president of the South Central Kansas Workforce Alliance. He's going to talk in more detail about the work that he has done in his region to align sector strategies and career pathways.

Just two other examples that I think that you may be interested in taking a look at is Louisville, Kentucky. KentuckianaWorks! has created two industry-focused One-Stop career centers, which is a really interesting approach. They have one in manufacturing and also one healthcare. It's a single location where employers can come to receive the education and training and employment assistance services that they need for their individual industry sector, but it also is the entry point into career pathways systems for workers, jobseekers and also students.

And then another place to take a look at is Seattle-King County in Washington. In Seattle they use their skill panels – which are what they call their industry partnerships – to help define career pathways within their high-demand industry sectors, develop training within the industries' businesses to address turnover and job retention issues; increase skills for current employees; encourage more youth and jobseekers to consider careers within those industry sectors; document workforce skills that will be required in the near future; expand apprenticeship opportunities; and also how to encourage the development of articulation agreements across educational systems.

I'm going to turn the slides now over to Keith Lawing. Keith, take it away.

KEITH LAWING: Thank you, Mary, and good day, everybody. It's a pleasure to be here and Mary, I really appreciate the two examples you just gave from both Louisville and Seattle; a couple of my colleagues and certainly some local areas that we have looked to over the years in terms of best practices that have certainly influenced what we do.

Again, I am Keith Lawing. I am the president and CEO – new title here recently – of the Workforce Alliance of South Central Kansas. A little context of who we are. We are a local workforce development board here in Kansas. We're one of five local workforce boards. We serve a mixed area here. We are a mixture of urban – Wichita is the largest city in the state of Kansas; we have a lot of suburban area we serve; and then very rural areas that we serve. I think it gives us both unique challenges and opportunities in how we address labor market and workforce development issues.

In case you did not know, Wichita is the air capital of the world. We have long been a leader in general aviation; some of the very familiar brand names, from Cessna, Beechcraft, Learjet, all were founded or certainly developed here in Wichita, and aviation manufacturing has been a big focus of what we've done and really driven some of the work we will talk about now related to sector strategies and career pathways.

And one of the things about this is that this is really, as Mary talked about, becoming a best practice in employment and training and something that we have been doing for a long time because of the nature of our economy. With the preeminence of aviation manufacturing we've been working in that sector for a long time and have been working with those businesses on looking at the skills needs and looking at this whole career pathways issue.

This goes back to about 2007, 2008. You can see some examples of what we really tried to do, and our boards for a long time felt that you have to integrate and leverage your WIA – now WIOA – resources into programs that have a larger community impact. The grant projects that we work on, the special initiatives you can see some listed there on the slide. We all try to integrate both a sector strategy and a career pathways into how we administer those programs and take on those strategies.

We have four workforce centers in our area and we also have multiple access points; again, realizing, recognizing the challenge of serving a rural area. We have everything from computer kiosks in some of our city halls where we might not have a facility. We stack that with materials and handouts. We also do workshops out of public libraries around our region for communities where we don't have an actual physical center; again, trying to increase access into the workforce system overall.

And then you can see the variety of partners that we have that are both co-located with us at any of our four workforce centers and also those partners that we work with just in terms of strategy implementation overall. So a nice mix, a nice variety; probably some programs that are familiar in the workforce centers and other centers you have as well.

Just getting on to where we see workforce boards and what they're really suited for. That really does go into what Mary talked about, convening partners and stakeholders and recognizing a common vision and mission and goals for career pathways systems. And then, looking at having labor market analysis, bringing that to the table that a workforce board can certainly do; looking at how you identify where those skills gaps and where training is needed and how does that translate into a shared community mapping process or an audit of your assets. And then, leveraging support and how do you build capacity.

So I think workforce boards bring a lot of that to the table in a very unique way that can help make some of these partnerships work to be effective. Again, getting done a little more specific, those LWIBs – you have connections to employers. Just look at the membership of your workforce board and that could be another strategic point of entry into the business community for strategic development. Use those board members to help you either as a convener or to be a champion or share those messages.

And then within the partners within that workforce system, how do you align those services and leveraged resources? And again, you can just see the list – the variety of opportunity that workforce boards can bring partners to the table. And then that last one again, it's that leveraged funding. I think all of us have routinely seen funding opportunities maybe diminish or funding being reduced around employment and training. These kind of strategies are a way to I think leverage the dollars into a system that, in my opinion, is perpetually underfunded in terms of what we're expected to produce.

One of the things we try to look at and the philosophy we bring in terms of our system is how do we accomplish a "No Wrong Door" approach; again, going to the variety of partners that work in that One-Stop system. How do you promote the idea that wherever you enter the point and you need some employment or skills training services – or you're an employer and you're looking to access the system – how do we try to have a No Wrong Door approach.

We do have a very integrated service delivery model here in South Central Kansas. There's a link to a video on this slide that's part of the "Voices of Experience" series that has been put together by the Employment and Training Association. It really does talk about how we've tried this whole concept of integrating sector strategies and career pathways through the services that we offer at our One-Stop center.

Going on down that list there, this really has become part of strategic initiative overall. Accelerating Opportunity, that was a grant that Kansas was part of around adult education; predates WIOA but we really looked at how you could apply a career pathway strategy to adult education; started that conversation back in 2010.

There was some legislation in Kansas passed – we call it Senate Bill 155 – that's really helping to promote career and technical education classes at the high school level. That gives us another opportunity to link in this whole concept of career pathways in the K-12 system.

We've had a couple of fairly significant grants around the TAA grants, community college grants in the last few years with some of our partners. One's focusing on the IT sector and the other focused on advanced manufacturing. That's helped us bring resources into our region for training and employment by this whole sector strategies and career pathways approach.

And then that last one is an employer-led regional economic development strategy we call BREG – and I'll talk more about that a little bit later – that really uses this whole sector strategy approach as an economic development strategy across the region.

And again, when you work with your One-Stop partners and focusing on that in particular – and this is something that we've worked on a great deal over the years, continue to work on it; I don't think the work here is ever done in terms of partner relations – but how do you identify those common services and resources that are available in a community? And how can partnerships work together through your workforce centers?

And then, clarifying stakeholders roles and goals. This is a really important piece, too. We need to understand from a workforce board perspective what are the performance measurements and the program goals of our partners, from whether it's vocational rehabilitation services, adult education services, to your other One-Stop partners – Wagner-Peyser, etc. – how can those partner programs achieve their goals within a career pathways or sector strategies approach? That's really trying to clarify that as much as possible and what would their role be in moving folks along those lines.

Then, when you talk about a No Wrong Door approach, that's a challenge around a common intake process. If somebody walks in a different location or logs in on the Internet, how do they all get to the same place in the same way that makes the most sense and can lessen the overall duplication of services?

What are the assessments that can be down in common or in partnership with other partners, and how do you align those policies and programs and then those identified funding resources? All very, very critical in my opinion in terms of how you have a broad sector strategies and career pathways approach to employment.

One of the things that we've certainly done is engaging with some of our very key partners in terms of engaging employers. And that's, as Mary mentioned earlier, a real key element in promoting and implementing sector strategies and career pathways approaches. We work directly with our economic development organization.

We have a six-county region. We go directly to those eco-devo directors who work with employers. We want them to understand who we are and the assets and the resources we can bring to the table for employers. We rely on their intelligence. When they go talk to an employer or a group of employers, what can they tell us that those employers are concerned about?

We try to offer some skills assessments that are relevant to employers. We have the Kansas Work-Ready certificate, ACT-based; NCCER, pretty familiar, pretty common across the country, but there's a tool we're trying to bring employers that we can help their bottom line; things like employer surveys; engaging employers in roundtable meetings. Those are all things we've done over the years and all effective tools to try to get your message out to employers.

Mary also mentioned this whole visual tool about mapping career pathways, and that's another big piece. You know, how do you implement – or look at (insta- ?) recognized credentials and certificates; how do you integrate those into a career pathway. What you have on this slide are a couple of examples of career maps.

I think there's a lot of tools across the country. We're trying to develop something very specific to our region and our state. One of the links that I'm showing you here is an example from Colorado; very, very cool stuff; very interactive. It incorporates current labor market information; very dynamic, good for the user, certainly the new millennials as we see them up and coming, very used to technology.

Another here is a tool – and my notes aren't in front of me so I apologize; I don't want to not give anyone the right credit. I think this comes through ETA and it might be doing an example out of Minnesota. They're out there all over the place, but I think you need to, from a workforce board perspective, get a visual that works for your strategies in your area.

Basic definition of stackable credentials. Another piece of this is a credential certificate that can lead to an associate's degree, then a bachelor's, then an ongoing degree into the targeted industry.

Here's a quick visual that we've used in terms of one of our sector partnerships around aviation. This is in a partnership with our technical college. You can see the beginning of the career pathway in aviation; you can see that through GED prep testing, some of those initial certificates.

Advanced aerostructures training; that's a 10-week entry course that you get credit from our technical college if you complete that, and that can lead directly to employment. Then ideally once you get that initial employment there's opportunities for continued education within advanced manufacturing. That again is an example of how we promote it.

One of the things as an internal sector strategy, we've created something called PACES back in 2009, which is a way that we've actually braided funding from national philanthropic organizations, local employers, local community-based organizations, with our WIA dollars; again, very focused on advanced manufacturing. We've used that model now to do healthcare and even some IT sector strategy; something we currently have going on and will continue to build on as we move forward.

Just again breaking down an example of our aviation sector strategy and want to get to some questions here pretty quickly, so just a few more slides to go. But within our aviation sector we have positioned the workforce board to where we take the applications, we do the pre-screenings for multiple employers at our One-Stop centers around aviation manufacturing.

A lot of those manufacturing employers require this Work-ready certificate for their job applicants. You have to get – if you're familiar with the terminology and the ACT testing – a silver or a bronze in order to qualify for a job at those companies.

And then for entry-level positions there are some employers that once you complete – an individual has completed that training at WATC they will guarantee a job interview at multiple companies. In fact, some employers are even guaranteeing a job for certain individuals who finish that training, earn that certificate.

This is where you need to be flexible in career pathways and sector strategies. For some employers – and again, it's very broad here around aviation. We have some OEMs, we've got suppliers of different size; some of them aren't looking for that certification. They maybe want an on-the-job training opportunity. So again, our career pathways strategy and sector strategy recognizes that's what the employer needs so we can be flexible.

Another piece we're working on certainly under WIOA is the idea of registered apprenticeships, and how do you maybe create new registered apprenticeships within advanced manufacturing that might meet that employer need? Especially an employer that isn't hiring dozens that maybe has a niche occupation but it's really critical for their business, and a registered apprenticeship might be a way that they can do a sector strategy or career pathway.

Again, mid-skill, there's other opportunities past entry-level, around the stackable credentials. What you see is just some very quick examples of very relevant credentials within aviation that can lead – this stackable credential piece, they all give you college credit and they can lead to an associate's degree. We have an articulation agreement we call the Shocker Pathway from our technical college to our university, Wichita State University, that produces engineers.

So that's back and the higher level. You can be an entry-level worker in aviation, but here's a map – a pathway that you can end up being an engineer within the same field pursuant to education and training opportunities.

Regional economic development, again I mentioned this earlier. We are partners in what we call BREG – Blueprint for Regional Economic Growth, working within multiple sectors in the region. All of the sectors recognize employment and training workforce development as a challenge, so we're right at the table to help develop those kind of partnerships.

And that brings us access to a number of employers, a lot of them who never look at the workforce or One-Stop system and maybe think, that's the unemployment insurance system, or we're adult education; it doesn't give me the talent level that I'm looking for. You can really change minds by working within this framework, format, and we've been able to do that with a number of employers.

Here's just a quick example about one of the ways we went about in terms of regional planning. This is an example – and not all of these counties in your view here on this slide are within our local area. This involves two workforce board regions. And you can map this any way. You can map this by employment levels; you can map this in terms of commuting patterns.

What we did was on sales within the healthcare sector. You can look at that 10-county region and look and see what is the impact of this business sector within a region? Who are the main employers? Who are the main players in this? That's, again, another way that you can design these whole sector strategies around – especially on a regional basis. And like I said, you can cut and slice the data in different ways in terms of a planning process.

Just quickly some ongoing challenges. Economic business cycles is just – you never know what's going to be happening in the business world. If somehow the stock market begins to respond to interest rates changes or something happens in terms of the oil and gas industry that suddenly impacts manufacturing – lots of different things impact the business cycle which certainly can impact what we're trying to do around here.

I think employer engagement is another challenge. You need champions within the business sector, within companies. They need to partner with local workforce boards to promote this kind of strategy. And if they get promoted or reassigned or they take another job sometime, you may lose your link to that company, and that's an ongoing challenge.

Partner relationships within a One-Stop system. The old proverb I've heard, and I'm going to butcher it, I'm sure – if you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go somewhere effectively, go together. So working with all your partners and getting multiple agencies on the same page is certainly an ongoing challenge.

I've already mentioned limited resources. We always need more money and we're always told to do more with less, so another ongoing challenge.

Just wrapping this up very quickly so we can get to some questions. Tips for local workforce development boards based on what my experience and our local workforce board's experience, it's really creating a leadership role for the board. What is that board plan? What is the strategic plan for those members to have? Recognizing their role and how they can help the board and the system advance sector strategies and career pathways.

You need a very diplomatic staff. This goes from your front-line staff people to the executive director for a local workforce board. How do you work, not only with your partners, but with the community at-large? And Mary's mentioned it, I'm going to say it over and over again – the primary role for that local workforce board is to be the convener or that broker of services; to be that workforce intermediary within a community.

Another key piece – build your relationships with your community and technical colleges. They have got to be on the same page with you. You've got to align your goals with those partners in particular because training is just such a key element in both of these strategies.

And then engage employers, not in where you're presenting to them but where you're listening to them. I've made this mistake where I go to a meeting with employers and I'm just all fired up and I'm talking about what we can give to them, not listening to what they need from us.

And I think from those employer situations, those employer meetings, you need to give them immediate feedback and demonstrate quick action, because that's what employers want to see. They don't want their time wasted at all.

So with that, it's my last slide. You can follow me on Twitter; I always need more followers. And I'm happy to answer any questions, certainly take any comments or suggestions from folks out there. Thank you very much.

MR. KEATING: All right. Sounds good. Thank you, Keith. And I think we are going to go ahead and take questions, so everyone should be dialed into the teleconference. It's the only way we're broadcasting the audio today, so I'll assume that you are.

All you need to do to jump in over the phone would be to press \*6 to unmute your phone line. So we want to encourage you to go ahead and do that now if you'd like to ask Keith or any of our other presenters a question. We've posted that teleconference information on your screen, but again, \*6 to unmute your line and you can press \*6 again to re-mute, which we highly encourage you to do, just to avoid any background noise one you're done asking your question or making your comment.

Going to be quiet to give you an opportunity to do that. Again, \*6. We would love to hear from you.

MR. HOOPER: Hi, everyone. This is Tom from JFF. All questions really welcome, so whether's it's about the integration –

MR. : Hello?

MR. HOOPER: Yeah. Go ahead.

MR. : This is Jim Lautner (sp). I'm with the Chester County Economic Development Council in southeastern Pennsylvania. There are five industry partnerships that are clustered here, each with their own pathways, etc.

My question for both Mary and JFF – by the way, loved working with Jobs for the Future a couple years ago on an energy project – and with Keith, is are you seeing – our employers seem to want quicker returns. They're much more interested in give me three 3-day weekend-type courses, stackable credentials, rather than a 12-week or 15-week semester. Are you running into similar types of things? And I'll mute out.

MR. LAWING: Yeah. This is Keith and I'll jump in right away on that. Yes, indeed and most definitely, and I think that's one of the other ongoing challenges about career pathways.

We are seeing employers, yes, wanting that quicker return on investment, and an employer's rethinking what they're looking for in that entry-level worker and how you can merge this idea. One of the things we're certainly looking at is an earn and learn model, to where an employer could hire somebody in a training situation and possibly pay them a training wage or you've got a defined time – maybe it's four weeks or six weeks, so they're working at a plant or at a shop two days a week, maybe they're classroom or lab training the other two days a week – earning a wage during that time so they're able to demonstrate to that employer straight out, can you do the work, are you skilled, are you a good fit for my company?

And part of the models we're looking at, we haven't fully implemented it. We've got a couple of examples that may be doing this through a staffing agency. I might have seen a question earlier on the screen about a staffing agency – so it's a temp-hire.

But at the end of that – and this is kind of our side of it for that jobseeker – we don't want this to be an OJT, so to speak, to where that person ends their OJT without anything to show for it if that employer doesn't hire them. At a minimum we want to give that jobseeker the benefit of some work experience, some training, and if they're not a good fit for that company how do they parlay that into being a good fit for a different company?

So I do think that's a great question and that goes back to the flexibility about how you implement career pathways and the timing. And this goes to the other thing – and I'll shut up here very quickly – you need partnership with the community and technical colleges. Employers cannot operate on a traditional semester calendar. They need employees when they need them.

So how does your partner – that education and training provider – start a cohort or some training in October or March or whatever the timeframe is when that employer needs to hire those folks? And I'll shut up after that if you want to follow up.

MS. CLAGETT: I think that's perfect, though. This is Mary.

I cannot – I think one of the biggest challenges for workforce systems and for the colleges, that one of the most important things is really changing the organization's delivery and the culture of our education and training system to be real-time focused; to modularize these things so you can have stackable credentials; trying to the degree that you can to get the colleges to figure out some way to provide credit for those shorter-term credentials so that it could be put on a college transcript, so workers, jobseekers, students can continue to build on those things.

You need to meet the immediate needs of employers, but allowing the worker or jobseeker to continue to work toward higher-level credentials. I know that's a big challenge, but hopefully – I mean, that's where I think having this done in concert or in combination with sector strategies, where if you have an industry partnership with your high-demand industry leaders in your region, that's going to give you a lot more ability to have those kinds of conversations and negotiate those kinds of major shifts with your education and training providers.

Again, easier said than done; very theoretical, but it's just common sense.

MR. HOOPER: That's great. Other questions?

MR. : Keith, this is Dan Fogerty (sp) with the Berks County Workforce Development Board in Redding, Pennsylvania.

MR. LAWING: Good afternoon.

MR. : Good afternoon. I'm just really intrigued with what you've done with braiding your funding in a sector strategy.

We're very focused on advanced manufacturing here, and I'm skilling our incumbent workforce and looking to actually utilize Title I funding as well as rapid response funding and trying to braid that with other sources. Did you have a chance to use either of those sources of funding in the past? And if so, how did that work out for you?

MR. LAWING: Yeah. We have, sort of by necessity. We certainly when the bottom of the economy fell out we had a whole lot of dislocated workers and were looking for every strategy possible.

We have been doing co-enrollments. We have a lot of Trade Adjustment Act petitions. In a lot of ways those are a lot more flexible for the jobseekers than WIA or WIOA was. This is, again, part of that integrated service delivery. We work very closely with our TAA service provider, the Department of Commerce. So we try to co-enroll people whenever possible.

That gives us this opportunity to do consistent counseling and job search assistance as we enroll people to try to focus those individuals into education and training programs, whether they're using the Title I dollars or the TAA funds towards this career pathway, the sector strategy approach. And we also accessed a lot of rapid response dollars. So when we go to these rapid response meetings, that's part of the information packet. We're trying to bring those career maps, career pathways, those training opportunities.

Because here was kind of the – one of the areas, the challenge we had to look at is that even though manufacturers are laying people off, we didn't necessarily want to transition these people to different industries because we still wanted to grow manufacturing. We needed to maybe grow other sectors of manufacturing. So that's where this approach really became key, is that you don't want to leave an industry behind that still has potential, but how do you, again, integrate that into your systems overall?

So co-enrollment has been a big part of it. It's common messaging about that industry throughout our partnerships. And the other piece of it then is that we've actually gone after some grants – very niche grants. There was one grant we had that was focusing on women in manufacturing; another grant focusing on long-term unemployed in manufacturing.

So that's kind of how we braided some of those other dollars and brought some other resources – again, free up some of our Title I dollars to work within other sectors, if that makes sense.

MR. : That's helpful, and you're really doing good work there. I guess what is in front of us now is we're kind of at functional full employment right now and we really are trying to dedicate some resources to incumbent workers and using some of those funds that we traditionally work with dislocated and adult populations; but really trying to use those to upskill incumbent workers and I just wondering if you had an experience doing that.

MR. LAWING: Yeah. And we're looking at the same thing, for example – and that's one of the reasons I've really – we're starting to put more focus – for a long time we've put a lot of focus on the entry-level place of the career pathway, in terms of our role. How do you get folks who come into our workforce centers in that entry-level and they can move up on their own?

But same issue I think you just described. Employers are looking more at that – especially with employment numbers the way they are, where's that mid-skill level? And for example, I heard an employer tell me with the advent of 3-D printing, he did not think 3-D printing was going to impact his business for maybe five or 10 years.

Clearly it's impacting him quicker than he thought. He said he's going to go from an environment where he – instead of 100 machinists he needs 10 programmers. So we're looking at some of those computer-aided – CAD classes or CATIA languages and introducing that to an employer for incumbent workers so you can take a machinist and maybe move him or her up a career pathway with some additional skill sets.

Those are very real and relevant challenges, especially when you're relying on manufacturing. You need opportunities for people to promote within because some of those entry-level jobs are just eventually going to be not as numerous, in my opinion.

MR. : I agree. Thank you.

MR. HOOPER: Other questions?

MR. : This is Jim Lautner again. Trying to let all this (go in ?), I just sent Keith an email but I think others may want to know this as well.

You mentioned IT; obviously a very changing industry. Any recent career maps or any incumbent worker training that you've had success with in the IT world?

MR. LAWING: We are actually working to develop a career map around IT, and I'm kind of a Luddite. I can barely operate my iPhone if I went to the setting page. So I'm not the right person to talk about this. But I've been amazed at the different levels or the different genres within IT. You know, from the software development piece, programming, and I think when you've got these ongoing business models there's a whole niche.

One of our partnerships is with Wichita State University and their very common approach is what we're seeing across the country. Louisville I think is one of the communities that's doing it under the TechHire grants – a lot of the short-term focused computer-based boot camp-style training where you're really focusing on a particular genre within IT, we are trying to do more and more of that.

And right now I'm just trying to understand the scope of the industry because it's ubiquitous. You've got manufacturing companies, you've got healthcare companies; they need IT specialists. You've got transportation companies that are looking for that. So that's really a hard area to map.

If you're just taking one industry and you're looking at a firm or a business that deals in IT services, that's where we're at right now. We've got a number of those kind of companies here in Wichita. We're working with them; it's ever-changing. We're getting a handle but I think that's going to be the larger challenge overall, is where does IT fit into these other sectors, whether it's manufacturing, whether it's healthcare, hospitality.

Cybersecurity is now becoming a huge buzzword. I think cybersecurity is probably the most recent area we're jumping into, as probably a lot of you are, in terms of how do you get your current employees skilled up to adequately protect your company, what are the credentials and then what are the long-term career possibilities within IT.

So it's ongoing, it's dynamic; it's moving. I think some of the strategies we talked around employer engagement would be good tools to help, but really need to have some very skilled people in the middle of this putting those together as soon as possible.

MR. HOOPER: Keith, how do you staff your sector partnership and career pathways work? You touched on this a little bit, but it'd be great to hear about how that works on a daily basis.

MR. LAWING: Yeah. And we mentioned this integrated service delivery. For example, what that looks like in our business services team, we've got a multi-agency business services team. That includes staff that are funded through our WIOA resources; they're funded through Wagner-Peyser; they're the levers, the (DVOPs ?), the (VETS ?) programs that are out there talking to employers.

So we bring those people together on a constant, consistent basis. We have them literally identified as being on the same team and we've divided them pretty much by cluster, by sector. So for example, the staff person we have that is working specifically around oil and gas – I didn't mention that sector in particular, but mining, that's a big area – that's a person from the Wagner-Peyser system, Department of Commerce. They focus on those employers in that sector.

Our staff person focused on the healthcare industry, that's a workforce investment – WIOA staff person. But they're all sharing data; they're all coming together and talking about how they work with employers in those particular sectors; same thing in manufacturing, retail services. That way that staff person starts to develop some expertise within that sector. They understand the business cycles better. They're following the news in terms of expansions or maybe layoffs within that industry.

But ideally on that team they're coming back and they're sharing all that together. This is what's been going on in advanced manufacturing; this is what's going on in healthcare. That way, again, we're able to leverage our resources and align our services a lot better; and gets our partners the opportunity to really be directly involved in how we implement sector strategies.

MR. HOOPER: That's great. Other questions for Keith and Mary?

MR. : I have a question. Keith, you're in Kansas, right?

MR. LAWING: Yes, sir.

MR. : I have a question. I work at the community college in Kansas City, in Missouri, and your partnerships between the junior college and the four-year institution; is there any way that we could ever work with your four-year institution, get contact information so we could figure that out?

MR. LAWING: Yes, definitely. Definitely. I know a lot of the folks up in the Kansas City area; my counterpart at the Workforce Partnership, Trent Howerton; I work with Clyde McQueen on the Full Employment Council.

And again, as we look at regions and sectors and you think about nationwide, we here in the Midwest are on this I-35 region, from Minnesota to Dallas, Mexico, Canada – we're on that same link right there. So probably a lot of opportunities and we'd be more than happy to follow up with you after this to talk about that.

MR. : I'd love to, because I'm with the MCC here in Kansas City and teach industrial technology, and I'm looking for a partner for a four-year institution. And I can maybe change my program a little bit and give my students a career pathway – or a pathway to go –

MR. LAWING: Yeah. That would be ideal and again would love to have that conversation.

I mentioned in my slides about the Shocker Pathway. Again, this is us here in the Wichita area focusing around aviation and that career pathway. The idea is with these stackable credentials, even an entry-level employment situation can lead you to an advanced degree within engineering or sub-sub-genre of training or education that would affect the industry.

This is where we need to go in career pathways – how do you link the entry-level piece to the higher-level back end piece? Would love to have a conversation with you about that.

MR. : Okay. I'll try to get ahold of you sometime after this.

MR. LAWING: Sounds great.

MR. HOOPER: Other questions on the integration of sector partnerships and career pathways, or employer engagement related to this work, other topics we touched on?

MS. : Good morning. This is Elisa (sp) from South Bay WIB. Greetings, everyone.

I was just listening from the standpoint of linking entry-level going into advanced degrees. I would be interested in learning more about that as well.

MR. LAWING: Well, what I would be more than happy to do – and I can get this out through Tom – but to show, to give an example of our Shocker Pathway; again, focusing within that sector. I don't know how many other examples are out there. Mary, if you're familiar of some other ones.

But I think as we are breaking ground in a lot of ways for a lot of workforce boards, that's really going to be a key piece, is what does the higher level of that career pathway strategy look like? I know during the development that we've undergone the last few years, my focus is, again, in that entry- to mid-level position; but how do we get that all the way up to bachelor's and master's and ongoing continuing education?

MS. : And it's needed, because it appears that if the potential candidate has the skill set that the employer is seeking specifically, it can fall into any (rim ?) beyond entry.

But if there's a need for the bachelor's degree or the master's degree in specific niches, that's very interesting. Because again, it's how do we elevate folks in their career and their skill level as it's appropriate, for their willingness as well as the opportunity of being there, but more importantly, what the employer needs.

MR. LAWING: Yeah. And the other piece of it, too – Mary, real quick before I let you in – but just relevant to that is with all the mounting student loan debt, a lot of employers on career pathways, they will give individuals tuition reimbursements or paid time off. This is a way to get more employers involved and getting people through career pathways.

That's another area that I think a lot of focus needs to be put on, is employer engagement and employer practice in terms of moving people through here. Maybe employers aren't taking money out of pocket, but how could they give somebody the opportunity to get that advanced degree relevant to their business model?

MS. : Excellent. Thank you. I'd love to explore that as well. Thank you.

MS. CLAGETT: This is Mary. Just one of those areas that I think – or places that you could look for information on something like this is a lot of the TAACCCT grants focus – like I know in healthcare some of the consortia of community colleges working with workforce systems focus on career pathways that did map all the way at least to the four-year degree programs.

Similarly I think the aviation may have; I'm not sure. Keith would know that better than me. But that's why it's very important to have workforce systems and colleges and other economic development leaders really talk about changing the way we think about providing education and training.

Like Keith said, it doesn't have to all continue to be semester-based or – (inaudible) – based. I mean, if we're looking at more and more competency-based learning, credit for prior learning, ways to accelerate, mapping – providing career maps and course maps to help people find the most accelerated way to get to the credentials they need; getting colleges to find ways to either give credit for noncredit or do that after the fact so that people can continue. These are things that are going to be really essential I think in the future.

MS. : Excellent. Yes. Thank you.

MR. HOOPER: We've got time for about two more questions. Other questions out there?

MR. KEATING: And again, the phone lines are open. Thanks everyone for participating. But if you'd like to chime in, \*6. (Pause.)

MR. HOOPER: I'll ask a last one. I'll start it, but if anyone has got a burning one, feel free to jump in.

Keith, if you could talk a little bit about how you've had your sector partnerships work on developing career pathways, that'd be great for folks to hear – the employers themselves.

MR. LAWING: Yeah. And this is where you really have to be careful with not dragging employers down into the drudgery of curriculum review and development.

But what we try to do at a higher level – and preferably with our partners from the community or technical college in the room – is basically talk to employers about what's your basic need. What are you looking for in that entry-level piece? What does success look like in terms of hiring somebody for you with that skill set?

So we will listen to what they say in terms of what the hard skills are, what specifically somebody would need. Then we try to match that up to with what is available either through short-term training or the degree training at our technical and community colleges. And again, you try to strip down maybe what is less important in an entry-level situation, what is the most important.

For example, we did a short-term training around machining and we looked at the full degree program in terms of what classes would you need to take to get that associate's degree. We had those employers basically list off or knock off from that degree – what are the key elements. So we boiled that down into what became an eight-week training program and we had five or six employers that said, I will guarantee interviews for everybody who will complete what you just did, that piece of training.

So the training itself was based on what was delivered within a degree framework, a degree format, but it was focused at that entry level with those key skill sets. And again, it was a handful of employers with competitors, so to speak, but within that same sector, boiling down what their common needs were.

And we've done the same thing with welding. We've looked just some of those key components for welding, and again, based it on what is available within that framework but scale it down to where it can be delivered on a shorter-term basis, more focused, and you guarantee a job interview, because that's my hook on it. If I'm going to pay for this training for our dollars, what are you going to do, employer, to help me make those placements?

MR. : That's great.

MR. HOOPER: We're in closing time. I'm going to hand it back to Brian. But first, a big thank-you to Mary and Keith for all your time today and for all of you for attending, too. Just really great questions on a wide variety of topics. I really appreciate everyone's participation today. Thanks very much.

MR. KEATING: All right. Great.

(END)